

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 210906Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3518

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 1028

FOL REPEAT BOMBAY 0155 SENT ACTION NEW DELHI 20 JAN 76.

QUOTE:

BOMAY 0155

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH ENRG IR IN

SUBJECT: INDIAN-IRANIAN NUCLEAR DISCUSSIONS

REF: NEW DELHI 17228; STATE 304414

1. ON THE TWO OCCASIONS I HAVE SEEN IAEC CHAIRMAN SETHNA SINCE VISIT OF DR AKBAR ETEMAD, CHAIRMAN OF IRAN'S ATOMIC ENERGY ORGANIZATION, I TRIED TO DRAW HIM OUT REGARDING PROSPECTS FOR INDIAN-IRANIAN COOPERATION IN ATOMIC FIELD. NEITHER OCCASION WAS CONDUCIVE TO THE KIND OF DISCUSSION I SOUGHT, SO I WAS NOT SURPRISED WHEN HE LIMITED HIMSELF TO SAYING THAT ETEMAD HAD REALLY COME ON A FACT-FINDING MISSION TO SEE WHAT INDIA HAD ACCOMPLISHED IN ATOMIC ENERGY FIELD. HE HAD NOT EXPECTED THAT ANY SPECIFIC PROGRAM FOR COOPERATION WOULD BE AGREED UPON DURING THE VISIT. ON BASIS THEIR OBSERVATIONS HERE, HE BELIEVES IRANIANS WOULD DECIDE WHAT KIND OF ASSISTANCE THEY MIGHT SEEK FROM INDIA IN A COOPERATIVE PROGRA. SETHNA INSISTED THAT FURTHER COMMENT REGARDING NATKCE OF

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COOPERATION AT THIS STAGE WOULD AMOUNT TO NO MORE THAN BASELESS

SPECULATION.

2. HOWEVER, TWO OF SETHNA'S ASSOCIATES, DR M.R.SRINIVASAN, DIRECTOR OF POWER PROJECT ENGINEERING DIVISION, AND C.K.JOSEPH, DIRECTOR (FOREIGN AFFAIRS), AS WELL AS IRANIAN COUNSUL GENERAL, MR MASSOUD MOADEL, HAVE GONE A BIT FURTHER IN TALKS WITH ME. WHILE THEY CONFIRM SETHNA'S BASIC POINT THAT ETEMAD'S VISIT WAS BASICALLY A "LOOK AND SEE" AFFAIR, THEY SAY THAT OUTLINE FOR FUTURECOOPERATION IS FAIRLY CLEAR. THEY SAY, AS NEWSPAPERS REPORTED, THAT COOPERATION IN POWER PLANT DEVELOPMENT IS EXCLUDED BECAUSE IRANIANS HAVE OPTED FOR DIFFERENT TECHNICAL APPROACH FROM THAT CHOSEN BY INDIANS. THEY SEE PROSPECTS PARTICULARLY GOOD IN AREAS LABORATORY DEVELOPMENT, ISOTOPE USE AND PERSONNEL TRAINING.

3. ALL THREE CLAIM THAT ETEMAND WAS ESPECIALLY IMPRESSED WITH BHABHA ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTER AND INDIAN DEPTH IN ATOMIC PERSONNEL AND BELIEVE IRAN CAN BENEFIT GREATLY FROM INDIAN EXPERTISE IN THESE AREAS. ETEMAD ALSO SAID SAME THING TO ME IN MY BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH HIM.

4. BOTH SRINIVASAN AND JOSEPH ARE CONVINCED IRAN IS WELL BEHIND INDIA IN DEVELOPMENT OF BASIC RESEARCH FACILITIES AND IN TRAINING PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ATOMIC PERSONNEL. THEY TERMED IRAN'S RESEARCH AND TRAINING PROGRAMS AS STILL UNIVERSITY-LINKED AND THEREFORE AT LOW STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT, AT LEAST INsofar AS CONVERTING THEM INTO PRACTICAL RESULTS IS CONCERNED. THEY INSIST THAT IT IS IN THESE AREAS THAT INDIA HAS CAPABILITY FOR ASSISTANCE AND TOWARD WHICH IT WILL DIRECT IS EFFORTS IN ANY JOINT PROGRAM WITH IRAN. IN EFFECT, THEY TOO DISMISSED MY QUERIES ABOUT COOPERATIVE VENTURES INTO MORE SENSITIVE AREAS AS PREMATURE.

5. I ASKED JOSEPH DIRECTLY WHETHER COOPERATION MIGHT EXTEND TO REPROCESSING OF SPENT FUEL AND HE REPLIED THAT NO ISSUES OF SUCH HIGH SENSITIVITY WERE DISCUSSED WITH IRANIANS. HE SAID INDIA WAS UP TO ITS EARS IN TRYING TO DEVELOP SUFFICIENT RESOURCES OF ITS OWN TO COPE WITH SENSITIVE PROGRAMS LIKE FUEL REPROCESSING AND EXPLOSION OF NUCLEAR DEVICES AND WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO OFFER ASSISTANCE TO OTHERS IN SUCH AREAS. JOSEPH ALSO SAID THAT AS INDIA IS A SIGNATORY TO PARTIAL TEST BAN TREATY, IT WOULD HAVE TO EXERCISE ESPECIAL CARE IN THIS AREA. HE FURTHER SAID I WOULD NOT

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INTERPRET EITHER HIS REMARKS OR MRS GANDHI'S STATEMENT AT MADRAS AS INDICATING INDIA CONCENTRATING ITS OWN EFFORTS ON PREPARATIONS FOR ANOTHER EARLY NUCLEAR EXPLOSION OF ITS OWN. HE CLAIMED INDIA STILL HAS MUCH TO DIGEST FROM FIRST RAJASHAN EXPLOSION. JOSEPH ALSO SAID THAT INDIA WOULD BE VERY CAREFUL IN DISCUSSING "SENSITIVE" MATTERS WITH A COUNTRY LIKE IRAN,EVEN IF IT HAD CAPACITY TO OFFER ASSISTANCE IN SUCH AREAS, WHICH HE REITERATED IT DOES NOT NOW HAVE.

6. COMMENT. ALL THESE OFFICIALS WERE CONVINCING IN MAINTAINING THAT INDIA AND IRAN DO NOT NOW ENVISAGE ANYTHING MORE THAN INNOCENT COOPERATION IN RESEARCH AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES, WHICH STILL AWAIT DEFINITION. NEVERTHELESS, I FIND IT ODD THAT ETEMAD'S VISIT WOULD CULMINATE IN A WELL PUBLICIZED CALL ON MRS GANCHI WHICH REQUIRED A TWO-DAY TRIP TO NEW DELHI BY SETHNA IF GREATER THINGS ARE NOT IN THE OFFING.
COURTNEY

UNQUOTE.
SAXBE

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